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Men or women
262 who believe themselves to be possessed by the spirits of dead
[756] chiefs (*ngulu*) start their vocation by sleeping apart from the rest of the community, and giving up porridge in favour of 'cold food'[1] (*ifyatalala*). Later, when their reputation is assured, their passage from ordinary life to the trance of possession is always marked by abstention from *ubwali*, and this fact is commented on excitedly by the rest of the villagers in some such terms as 'Look! He has stopped eating. He is only eating cold things.' It is also not uncommon for an individual who feels himself to be hurt or
[626] insulted, to register his protest against his neighbours by refusing porridge in the most ostentatious way possible. There is no need in this case for him to starve completely, but merely to abstain from the staple dish. For instance, a girl, jilted by my cook in specially humiliating circumstances, ate nothing but pumpkins and gourds for four days. This was described to me impressively as, 'Look! Grief has caught her by the throat. She is refusing food.'[2] It was considered the correct conduct for a woman in such circumstances, and I have notes of similar instances on other occasions. All such examples show the extent to which, in ritual as well as fact, *ubwali* stands for 'food' in this particular tribe; and in this emotional attitude to their staple crop I think the Bemba resemble the majority of primitive tribes.

(*b*) *Umunani*. But the native, while he declares he cannot live without *bwali*, is equally emphatic that he cannot eat porridge without a relish (*umunani*), usually in the form of a liquid stew. Both constituents of the meal are essential.

About two pounds of *umunani* would be reckoned as sufficient to eat with five pounds of *ubwali*, and in fact the amount of porridge prepared varies with the supply of relish available. 'When we have little *umunani*, then we cook little porridge', a woman said, and on days when no relish was procurable, it sometimes happened that no porridge was prepared all day (cf. pp. 178–83).[3] Thus it will be seen that to improve the food-supply in this area by increasing the production of millet would be useless without at the same time ensuring an adequate supply of vegetable crops for relish.

The term *umunani* is applied to stews—meat, fish, caterpillars,

[1] This taboo is also connected with the ritual attitude to the handling of fire and the Bemba beliefs as to the impurity caused to food by polluted fire.

[2] *Mweni apa! Cikonko camuikata pa mukoshi! Akana cakulya.*

[3] Men travelling are, however, sometimes forced to do without *umunani* and this is described by a special term *ukutula*.

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present headman, since the title is hereditary, but the first are closer connexions to him than the second, and the distinction is made between those men and women who actually joined the community on his account and those who originally belonged to the past village.)

(*b*) *Two villages composed of the family group of the headman plus that of one or more other bakalamba* (*great ones*), i.e. contemporaries, men who have remained in the village after the death of the previous headman, or those temporarily members of the community, while they are gathering a sufficient following to enable them to build a village of their own.

e.g. *Pambalasa*, near Chinsali (1930).

Relatives of headman:

Matrilocal group: 2 wives, 2 married daughters and husbands, 2 married daughters (husbands away), 2 married grandsons, wife's maternal niece (deserted).

Matrilineal group: 1 mother, 1 married sister and husband, 1 maternal niece (deserted), 1 maternal nephew and wife.

Others: 2 married sons and wives.

Relatives of a mukalamba. ShiNconi, husband of headman's maternal niece (i.e. still living in his wife's village, but in his middle age become head of a group of his own), 1 mother, 2 married sisters, 2 brothers (married to Pambalasa's daughters), 1 brother also married into the village.

Relatives of a mukalamba. ShiMulenga (awaiting permission to form a village of his own) and head of a following, i.e. 2 wives, 1 mother, widowed wife of father, 4 married sisters, 3 married maternal nieces, wife's brother, 3 unmarried maternal nephews. (With this following ShiMulenga formed a village in 1931.)

Kacienga, near Shiwa Dandu (1931 and 1933).

Headman's *matrilocal group* composed of his wife and 7 married daughters and their husbands; the mother and deserted sister of one of his sons-in-law, and a married sister of his wife's.

Two bakalamba, distant connexions of the former headman, each with his own small following composed of 2 married daughters and their husbands.

(*c*) *Village formed on a basis of common purpose.*

Mulenga, near Nkula, 1933. The village of an *ngulu*, i.e. man possessed by a chief's spirit and able to heal people through his knowledge of medicines and powers of clairvoyance. In this instance the kinship structure was hardly apparent, since so many strangers had joined Mulenga in order to get his blessing (many of them barren women hoping to secure children through the blessing of the spirit).